

Tripartite cooperation and digitalisation in Norway

(Nina Monsen, Advisor, Norwegian Union of Municipal and General Employees/Fagforbundet)

A crucial feature of Norwegian political life is social dialogue and tripartite cooperation. Consideration for workers' know-how and experience is key to achieve quality digital services in the public sector. The economic and social model often referred to as the Nordic model is also the foundation for the Nordic countries' successful digitalisation of the public sector.

For public sector workers to welcome and constructively take part in the digital transformation of public services, they have to be involved from the very beginning and receive necessary training. Public services, whether digital or not, should be kept in public hands.

In 2017 Fagforbundet signed a national tripartite cooperation agreement to shape an inclusive strategy for the digitalisation of public services in Norwegian municipalities. The parties in the agreement, besides the trade unions in the municipal sector, are the Norwegian Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation and the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities.

The agreement commits the parties to engage in social dialogue and active worker participation in shaping the processes that will accompany the digital transformation in Norwegian municipalities.

The agreement underlines that worker involvement and access to training are critical factors if public sector digitalisation is to succeed. Digitalisation is more than just ICT and technology. It means a new working situation for both employers and employees.

An example of worker involvement is how Drammen municipality, with around 63 000 inhabitants, involves the employees in the digitalisation processes in its health sector. The municipality has a steering committee for the digitalisation of the health care services. The shop steward has a permanent position in the steering committee. In addition, employees on the ground, for example health workers in elderly care, are appointed as "digital agents" with a special responsibility for testing and deciding on new digital devices and training of co-workers.

A recent survey revealed that public sector workers in Norway take a positive stand towards new technology. Almost 90 percent of members believe that new technology will help them deliver better public services.

One example of the negative consequences of ignoring warnings from the trade union is when the South-Eastern Regional Health Authority in Norway decided to outsource their ICT systems.

The outsourcing move was, as is very often the case, meant to save money. Despite warnings against the move by employees and their shop steward, the health authorities went ahead and outsourced its ICT systems. The outsourcing led to contracted workers in Asia and Eastern Europe wrongfully being granted access to sensitive patient information. The exposed confidential health information involved almost 3 million Norwegians. The contract has now been terminated.

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An: Duttine, Armin <armin.duttine@verdi.de>

Betreff: Article on tripartite cooperation on digitalisation in Norwegian municipalities

Dear Armin

Here is a link to an article I wrote for PSI on this issue: <http://www.world-psi.org/en/norwegian-municipal-union-signs-tripartite-agreement-worker-involvement-and-social-dialogue-public>

Warm regards

Nina

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